

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2003

McAllen Sector Seizes \$5.8 Million Worth of Narcotics

McALLEN, Texas – Border Patrol Agents of the McAllen Sector Falfurrias Border Patrol Station seized 3,347 pounds of marijuana and 97.6 pounds of cocaine, in three separate seizures valued at \$5,803,360.

The first seizure occurred on March 7 at the Falfurrias, Texas, Border Patrol checkpoint, located 13 miles south of Falfurrias on U.S. Highway 281. The seizure occurred at approximately 1:15 p.m. when a 1999 Ford Expedition entered the primary inspection area. A Border Patrol Agent questioned the driver -- a U.S. citizen -- and his wife -- a resident alien -- as to their immigration status as a Border Patrol canine conducted a free air non-intrusive inspection of the exterior of the vehicle. The canine alerted positively to the vehicle indicating that there were humans or narcotics concealed within the vehicle. The driver consented to a search of his vehicle resulting in the discovery of a panel in the floorboard. The panel was removed and 30 bundles of cocaine wrapped in black electrical tape were found. The cocaine weighed a total of 84 pounds and is valued at \$2,688,000.

The second seizure occurred on March 8 at the Falfurrias checkpoint at approximately 2:05 p.m., when a 1998 Ford F-150 entered the primary inspection area. The driver was questioned as to his immigration status while a canine sniffed the exterior of the vehicle. The canine alerted positively to the vehicle and the driver was referred to the secondary inspection area for a closer inspection. The driver consented to a search of his vehicle leading agents to the discovery of a compartment in the transfer case of the vehicle. The transfer case is attached to the vehicle's transmission and transfers power from the transmission to the front axle on 4-wheel-drive vehicles. The compartment contained 23 bundles of cocaine wrapped in foil weighing 13.6 pounds. The cocaine is valued at \$437,760.

The third seizure occurred on March 10 at approximately 1:30 a.m. at the Falfurrias checkpoint when a tractor-trailer entered the primary inspection area. As an Agent questioned the driver regarding his immigration status, a canine sniffed the exterior of the vehicle. The canine alerted positively to the trailer portion of the vehicle and the driver was referred to the secondary inspection area. The driver consented to a search of his vehicle leading agents to the discovery of 383 bundles of marijuana weighing a total of 3,347 pounds. The bundles of marijuana were discovered amongst a cargo of cabbage within the trailer. The marijuana is valued at \$2,677,600.

Suspects in all cases were arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute. All suspects, vehicles and contraband were turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration in Corpus Christi, Texas, for further investigation and disposition.

-USBP-